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"When we work in the fields we eat five times daily: as soon as we reach the place we have a light lunch (*zakuska*), at nine we have the *ruchok*, at one dinner, at five another *zakuska*, and in the evening after finishing work we have supper. We older people don't eat between meals but let the children do so if they are hungry."

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From time to time during my stay in the village I tried to teach the tavern cook some simple and uncomplicated western dish to vary the biting peasant food. She tried faithfully but unsuccessfully to comply. After one such hopeless but courteous attempt she read me a little lesson in village menus:

"We Dragalevtsy people are pretty conservative in everything and have added no new dishes to our menu. The western combinations which people eat in Sofia are tasteless and slimy. If one doesn't use lots of salt, hot pepper, and vinegar, then the food has no taste at all."

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Beverages other than milk and wine made little appeal. Wine was much in evidence on holidays or when there were guests. An average village home would use from 250 to 300 quarts of wine a year. Most of the *rakiya* was drunk either at the taverns or on festive occasions. In commenting on the liquor consumption of the village one man said:

"We are not such fools as not to drink wine, for the wine is transformed into blood and gives strength to man."

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Someone has said that a house does not become a home until it knows a birth, a wedding, and a death. In other words, it is more than plaster walls, crude furniture, and steaming food. It is even more an association of memories deeply rooted in family crises.

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A frequently recurring crisis in Dragalevtsy was childbirth, which always took place in a home, never in a hospital. Usually it was the home in which the couple lived, for only rarely did the wife return to her paternal home for the event. When a woman learned that she was pregnant, she told the fact only to her own mother and to her husband, embarrassment preventing further disclosure. The mother-in-law learned about it a month later, for in the words of one of the older village men:

"She always looks at the undershirts of the daughter-in-law that are to be washed, and so draws the conclusion that leads her to ask the younger woman in the conventional phrase, 'Something's going to happen, isn't it?' The daughter-in-law becomes very embarrassed and does not say anything until the older woman assures her that it is something perfectly natural and something which she herself has experienced. Then the daughter-in-law will answer, 'Well, I don't know. Maybe there is such a thing as you suggest.' So pregnancy," concluded this informant, "is considered rather immoral and women are embarrassed to tell the others about it."

Because of the shyness and innate modesty of the Dragalevtsy matron, remarkable traits in view of the crowded living conditions, I found it helpful to supplement and check the information given by men in this connection. Miss Petrana Peneva, of the American College, rendered invaluable aid in interviewing the women.

No special prenatal care was given to the mother in spite of the efforts on the part of the doctor to get such women to come for advice. The villagers knew that the mother-to-be must not bend much nor lift heavy things. They also told her not to jump over a dog, "because the child would then have a hoarse voice or no voice at all." Generally she was given whatever she asked for on the grounds that "if she is not satisfied, there is danger that the baby in her will die." One day I attended a carding *sedenka*, which was a gathering of about twenty women in one of the homes to help the hostess card her wool. I noticed that one woman, obviously pregnant, tasted the stew being prepared for dinner in the entryway each time she passed it. I was given two reasons for this: "She better than anyone else present could judge the correctness of the seasoning" and "If she did not taste of the food each time she passed, she would have a miscarriage." Yet custom did not allow the expectant mother to eat fresh fish because "the nose of the baby will be closed [adenoids]"; nor could she drink from a pail of water for fear that the baby if a boy would be born with swollen sex organs. But, other than these practices and prohibitions, little fuss was made over the expectant mother. No special prayers were said for her nor were any special services held. "The woman is born

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BALKAN VILLAGE

The woman is born

562 to be a mother. She knows it and, as her duty, should not expect anything from the others."

843 Before the birth of the child, swaddling clothes were prepared, and a cradle and wooden tub were bought. The mother herself was not supposed to sew because it was believed that this would make the baby dumb. In fact, nobody went to any trouble at all to provide an elaborate layette, for that would really seem to the peasants like tempting fate. One of the men asked me, "Who can tell whether it will be a boy or a girl, and most important, who has unnecessary money to throw away in vain, for the baby may die?"

844 At the delivery of the baby, all the young people were sent away, and only the old people and the midwife remained with the mother. "The business of the relatives is to give courage to the mother, and in case the delivery of the child is painful, the midwife massages and carefully pulls the baby out."

The peasants much preferred the midwife or *baba*, to whose old-fashioned ways they were accustomed. To be sure, they called in the village doctor if the case seemed very complicated or if the woman fainted in labor. Dr. Chirkova has encountered many interesting superstitions and folkways in her village experience; these she included in her annual reports to the District Health Office. For instance, since the baby is supposed to be born on straw, in conformity with the birth of Christ, some deliveries occurred in mangers where the doctor was quite apt to find the baby blue with cold. There were instances of women who kept the pains secret from everyone, especially the husband, for they did not "want to add to his troubles." Some of these women even went so far as to remain alone during the childbirth, cutting the cord with a sickle and tying it with their own hair. Such instances, however, were exceptional.

Many deliveries were made with the woman standing, but when labor seemed to be difficult those in attendance put a rope beneath her breasts, tied it to the ceiling, and swung her "in order that the baby might be born more easily." To lessen the ordeal still more, the *baba* moistened the lips of the woman with an herb called "The Hands of the Holy Virgin," which had been put into a bowl of water. It is assumed that the Virgin will render direct aid,

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they made a noise, and they were preceded by girls carrying sickles and scythes and shouting, driving and threatening the cattle plague, the killer of cows. They killed any animal that might run out in the way of the procession. Three furrows were ploughed. Alternatively, two fires were lit at opposite ends of the village. The girls gathered at one end and the women at the other, and the girls drove a plough round the village. A naked woman then ran round the village with a black cock, which was thrown alive on to the fire. After that a woman was harnessed to the plough and made three circular furrows again.¹ Both Russians and Germans also sowed the furrows with sand or ashes. These rites bear certain resemblances to the rites connected with new fire for plagues, that are generally performed by men.

In most cases women, i.e. virgins or old women who have ceased to menstruate, drive or draw the plough. They are generally naked and with loosened hair. Among the South Slavs there is a tendency for their functions to be taken over by young men (as in Italy according to Pliny). Women take part in new fire ceremonies, but the actual making of the fire is characteristically reserved for men.

The same ritual elements occur in the following: In Western Bulgaria a bearing woman, who feared that she might have a premature labour, was 'ploughed in' (*zaorvana*). The business was done by another woman, who knew the exact ceremonial and was called *zaorvačka* (a good example of a special title for a person performing a special function). The plougher took the blade of a plough and ploughed the earth round the pregnant woman, who stood upright, going in a circle from right to left and ending at the exact spot from which she began the furrow. Three circles were made. The ring of the blade was washed over a dish of water and three spoons were held downwards over the water so that the latter was collected again in the dish. Nine grains of wheat, which had been put in the pregnant woman's mouth, were added

¹ Teršičenko, *Byt Russtago Naroda*, vi (1848), pp. 40-1; cf. Zelenin, *op. cit.* pp. 66-9.

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● 843 and she then washed in the water and swallowed the grains. When the time came for her to be delivered she had to be unploughed (*razorana*), the same ceremony being repeated, with the difference that the ploughing was done from left to right.¹ Marriage as a binding rite, in which circling sometimes plays a part, seems to be emphasised in the firmly enrooted prejudice to being married with any disease or defect, from the point of view of the sufferer, no less than that of the other party. 'God forbid that one should marry sickness, for then it will never pass.'

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753 The measurement of a patient can serve for diagnosis, for prognosis and for cure. As a prognostic only it can be used in almost any case. As diagnosis and cure it is applied generally in illnesses of a more or less supernatural origin, above all to *strava* (the disease of fear or shock), *urok* (ill-wishing, evil eye, possession), and epilepsy; occasionally to fevers, partly those caused by magic, sore throat, mumps, and swellings, or in a district where this method happens to be in particular favour, to a great number of diseases. S
[756] It is carried out by special persons, old women who know the words which should accompany the rite.

For instance, the patient informs the old woman that he has suffered some shock or annoyance; that his heart beats high in his throat or too quickly; he cannot sleep; he has a pain in his back; his appetite fails; and so on. The old woman fetches a length of twine or thread, a besom and a knife. The patient stands up, his feet together, his arms stretched out level with the shoulders. With the thread, mumbling some secret words, the old woman measures him first from the left heel to the chin and round the head, and from the tip of the right middle finger to the tip of the left middle finger. After each measurement the thread is cut with the knife to some such words as: 'Thus I cut you off, unhealthy sickness, thus I cut you from X.' During the second measurement both ends of the first thread are held in the hand. The difference in length between the two measurements, taken left heel end to right

¹ In the Lomako district, cf. Sb.N.U. xii.